

Diane Smith Testimony in Support of S.B. 82 / February 7, 2023

My name is Diane Smith. I am 53 years old and the first person in several generations of my family to have not committed suicide. With three hospitalizations and decades of treatment over the last 40 years, I battle my chronic depression every day. Although I do not receive Social Security, the Department of Social Services and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services have found that the severity of my disability qualifies me for services and the MED-Connect program. I am a single person and live with my mother. Having access to the MED-Connect program since 2019 has had an immensely positive impact on my life. MED-Connect allows me to work full-time as a special education teacher for students with emotional and/or cognitive disabilities in an approved special education program that is both flexible and understanding of my situation. Working as a special education teacher for students with emotional disabilities allows me to give back and prepare them for their lives after they graduate and hopefully make their lives a little easier.

However, the asset allowance for the MED-Connect program means being in a perpetual state of financial instability. I will never be able to buy a house because I will never have enough savings for a down payment without being terminated from the program. I will always have to take out a car loan and be in debt because putting anything over \$10,000 on a reliable car will result in me being terminated from MED-Connect. I will never have a fully-funded emergency fund because it will result in the termination of the MED-Connect coverage. In closing, I ask that you vote for S.B. 82, An Act Eliminating Income and Asset Limits for the MED-Connect Program for Persons with Disabilities. If passed, this act will allow me to pull myself out of this draining financial peril and redirect my energy and resources to living a healthy life for many more decades to come. Thank you for your time and consideration.